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from the Cingalese who found it, the Spanish adventurer who stole it, the car- door in the fearless old fashion of a bydinal who bought it, the pope who gra- gone day and declare I'd shoot any ciously accepted it, the favored son of man who left while a drop remained in the church who received it, the gay and | the bottles. giddy duchess who pawned it, down to trust as a family heirloom.

It will occupy a chapter to itself in my forthcoming work on "Historic Stones," where full details of its weight, size, color and value may be found. At present I am going to relate an incident in its history which, for obvious reasons, trust the reader will consider related in strict confidence.

I had never seen the stone itself when began to write about it, and it was not until one evening last spring, while staying with my nephew, Sir Thomas Acton, that I came within measurable distance of it. A dinner party was impending, and at my instigation the bishop of Northchurch and Miss Panton, his daughter and heiress, were among the invited guests.

The dinner was a particularly good one, I remember that distinctly. In fact, I felt myself partly responsible for it, having engaged the new cook-a talented young Italian pupil of the admirable old thef at my club. We had gone over the menu carefully together, with a result refreshing in its novelty, but not so daring as to disturb the minds of the innocent country guests who were bidden

The first spoorful of soup was reassuring, and I looked to the end of the table to exchange a congratulatory glance with Leta. What was amiss? No response. Her pretty face was flushed, her smile constrained; she was talking with quite unnecessary empressement to her reighbor, Sir Harry Landor, though Leta is one of those few women who understand the importance of letting a man settle down tranquilly and with an undisturbed mind to the business of dining, allowing no topic of serious interest to come on before the releves, and reserving mere conversational brilliancy for the entremets.

Guests all right? No disappointments? had gone through the list with her, selecting just the right people to be asked to meet the Landors, our new neighbors. Not a mere cumbrous county gathering. nor yet a showy, imported party from town, but a skillful blending of both. Had anything happened already? I had been late for dinner and missed the arrivals in the drawing room. It was Leta's fault. She had got into a way of oming into my room and putting the ast touches to my toilet. I let her, for am doubtful of myself nowadays after many years' dependence on the best of valets. Her taste is generally beyond dispute, but lay she had indulged in a feminine vagary that provoked me and made me lat ? for dinner. "Are you going to wear your sapphire.

Uncle Paul?" she cried in a tone of dismay. "Oh, why not the ruby?" "You would have your way about the

table decoration," I gently reminded her. With that service of Crown Derby repousse and orchids the ruby would look absolutely barbaric. Now, if you would have had the Limoges set, white andles and a yellow silk center"-"Oh, but-I'm so disappointed-I vanted the bishop to see your ruby-or

one of your engraved gems"-"My dear, it is on the bishop's account I put this on. You know his daughter is heiress of the great Valdez san-

phire"-"Of course she is, and when he has the charge of a stone three times as big as yours what's the use of wearing it?

The ruby, dear Uncle Paul, please!" She was desperately in earnest I could see, and considering the obligations which I am supposed to be under to her and Tom, it was but a little matter to yield, but it involved a good deal of extra trouble. Studs, sleeve links, watch guard, all carefully selected to go with the sapphire had to be changed, the emerald which I chose as a compromise requiring more florid accompaniments of a deeper tone of gold, and the dinner

hour struck as I replaced my jewel case, the one relic left me of a once handsome fortune, in my fireproof safe. The emerald looked very well that evening however. I kept my eyes upon

it for comfort when Miss Panton proved

She was a lean, yellow, dictatorial young person, with no conversation. I spoke of her father's celebrated sapphires. "My sapphires," she amended sourly: "though I am legally debarred from making any profitable use of them." heathen. I gave the subject up, and while she discoursed of the work of the Blue Ribbon Army among the Bosjesman, I tried to understand a certain dislocation in the arrangement of the table. Surely we were more or less in number than we should be. Opposite side all right. Who was extra on ours? I leaned glimpses of plumes pink and green nod- | er's just now." ding over a dinner plate, and beneata them a pink nose in a green visage, with | hall.

a nutcracker chin altogether unknown glance down the table and caught me safe; don't trust a ring off your hand, up the sapphire. Lady Carwitchet tells marked in addition two clawlike hands, with point lace ruffles and a mass . brilliant rings, making good play with : impetuous whisper; he gave me a meanknife and fork. Who was she? At in- ing glance and departed with his daughtervals a high, acid voice could be heard | ter. I went back to the drawing room addressing Tom, and a laugh that made me shudder; it had the quality of the scream of a bird of prey or the yell of a iackal. I had heard that sort of laugh

a defenseless rabbit. Every time it sounded I saw Leta's fan flutter more furiously and her manner grow more nervously animated. wife was my greatest friend. Mira that inferior catseye for six weeks! Poor, dear girl. I never in all my recol-

the conservatory? I doubted it, and I him so mad when I wore this." with him when I got him there.

excepted. I can give its whole history, should be obeyed, I swore, nevertheless, even if I were driven to lock the

The ladies were rising. The lady at the eminent prelate who now holds it in the head of the line smirked and nodded her pink plumes coquettishly at Tom. while her hawk's eyes roved keen and predatory over us all. She stopped suddenly, creating a block and confusion.

"Ah, the dear bishop! You there, and I never saw you! You must come and have a nice long chat presently. will not be published-which, in fact, I Bye-by!" She shook her fan at him over my shoulder and tripped off. Leta, passing me last, gave me a look of profound



Ah, the dear hishop! You there, and I never saw you!"

"Lady Carwitchet!" somebody ex-"I couldn't believe my eyes." "Thought she was dead or in penal servitude. Never should have expected to see her here," said some one else behind me confidentially.

"What Carwitchet? Not the mother of the Carwitchet who"-"Just so. The Carwitchet who"-Tom assented with a shrug. "We needn't luck. I met them at Buxton, thought them uncommonly good company-in fact. Carwitchet laid me under a great obligation about a horse I was nearly let in for buying—and gave them a general invitation here, as one does, you know. Never expected her to turn up with her luggage this afternoon just before dinner, to stay a week or a fortnight if Carwitchet can join her." A groan of sympathy ran around the table. "It can't be helped. Ive told you this just to show that I shouldn't have asked you here to meet this sort of people of my own free will, but, as it is, please say no more about them." The subject was not dropped by any means, and I took care that it should not be. At our end of the table one story after another went buzzing

around-sotto voce out of deference to Tom, but perfectly audible. "Carwitchet? Ah, yes. Mixed up in that Rawlings divorce case, wasn't he? A bad lot. Turned out of the Dragon Guards for cheating at cards, or picking pockets or something-remember the row at the Cerulean club? Scandalous exposure—and that forged letter business-oh, that was the mother-prosecution hushed up somehow. Ought to be serving fourteen years and that business of poor Farrars, the bankers-got hold of some of his secrets and blackmailed him till he blew his brains

It was so exciting that I clean forgot the bishop; till a low gasp at my elbow startled me. He was lying back in his chair, his mighty shaven jowl a ghastly white, his fierce, imperious eyebrows drooping limp over his fishlike eyes, his splendid figure shrunk and contracted. He was trying with a shaking hand to pour out wine. The decanter clattered against the glass and the wine spilled on

"I'm afraid you'll find the room too warm. Shall we go into the library." He rose hastily and followed me like a

He recovered himself once we got into the hall, and affably rejected all my proffers of brandy and soda-medical advice everything else my limited experience could suggest. He only demanded his carriage "directly," and that

Miss Panton should be summened forth-

I made the best use I could of the time left me. "I'm uncommonly sorry you do not feel equal to staying a little longer, my She furthermore informed me that she lord. I counted on showing you a few viewed them useless gands, which ought trifles of precious stones, the salvage to be disposed of for the benefit of the from the wreck of my possessions. Nothing in comparison with your own collec-

The bishop clasped his hand over his heart. His breath came short and quick. "A return of that dizziness," he explained with a faint smile. "You are thinking of the Valdez sapphire, are you not? Some day," he went on with forced forward. Lady Landor on one side of composure, "I may have the pleasure Tom: on the other who? I caught of showing it to you. It is at my bank- had been in the Montanaro family for

"You are well known as a connoisseur, your pocket till the house is clear again."

my head swimming with bewilderment. "What! The dear bishop gone!" before, and it always made me feel like | rounded by most of the gentlemen, all Montanaro, daughter of the great banker, It is a time I cannot think of even now ed in two, was laid beside me. I read the sapphires? Has any one ever seen but that of old General Fairford, who -for the Paris exhibition. I showed it unobserved. "Keep the B. from join- her in them? Eleven large stones in a would go anywhere and meet any one to him this, and he claimed it for his own ing us in the drawing room." The B.? lovely antique setting and the great to get a rubber after dinner; the doctor, work at once, and pointed out his pri-The bishop, of course. With pleasure. Valdez sapphire—worth thousands and a sporting widower, and the Duberlys, vate mark upon it. You must take

pottering among rare editions, tall ness of tint in its lights and shades-a copies and Grolier bindings, nor constone to remember! I stretched out my else in the world, its present owner not tree ferns and orchids. Leta must and drew back with a coquettish squeal. "No! no! You mustn't look any closer. it pretty?"

"Superb," was all I could ejaculate, miraculous jewel in a sort of trance.

cackle, and all the idiots around her

to be imitations, and poor ones. I felt a | big stick, he looked like a poacher. queer thrill of self mistrust. Was the large stone no better? Could I, even for an instant, have been dazzled by a sham, and a sham of that quality? The events of the evening had flurried and confused me. I wished to think them over in

quiet. I would go to bed. My rooms at the Manor are the best in the house. Leta will have it so. I must explain their position for a reason to be understood later. My bedroom is opens on one side into a sitting room in | better. the east corridor, the rest of which is this room I noticed a couple of housemaids preparing it for the night and discovered with a shiver that Lady Carwitchet was to be my next door neighbor. It gave me a turn.

The bishop's strange warning must have unnerved me. I was perfectly safe from her ladyship. The disused door into her room was locked and the key safe on the housekeeper's bunch. It was also undiscoverable on her side, the recess in which it stood being completely filled by a large wardrobe. On my side hung a thick soundproof portiere. Nevertheless, I resolved not to use that room while she inhabited the next one. I removed my possessions, fastened the door of communication with my bedroom and dragged a heavy ottoman across it.

Then I stowed away my emerald in my strong box. It is built into the wall of my sitting room, and masked by the lower part of an old carved oak bureau. I put away even the rings I wore habitually, keeping out only an inferior catseye for workaday wear. I had just made all safe when Leta tapped at the door and came in to wish me good night. She looked flushed and harassed and ready to cry. "Uncle

"My dear!"- I was too amazed to expostulate.

"We've got a-a pestilence among ground angrily, "and the least we can do is to go into quarantine. Oh, I'm so sorry and ashamed! The poor bishop! I'll take good care that no one else shall meet that woman here. You did your best for me, Uncle Paul, and managed hoped against hope that what between the dusk of the drawing room before dinner and being put at opposite ends of the table, we might get through without a

meeting"-

than any one else?" "Why? I thought everybody had heard of that dreadful wife of his who nearly broke his heart. If he married her for her money it served him right, but Lady Landor says she was very handsome and really in love with him at first. The Lady Carwitchet got hold of her and led her into all sorts of mischief. She left her husband, he was only a recand went to live in town, got into a horrid fast set, and made herself notorious. You must have heard of her."

"I heard of her sapphires, my dear. But I was in Brazil at the time." "I wish you had been at home. You might have found her out. She was furious because her husband refused to let her wear the great Valdez sapphire. It some generations, and her father settled Miss Panton's steps were heard in the | it first on her and then on her little girl -the bishop being trustee. He felt obliged to take away the little girl and Mr. Acton," he went on hurriedly. "Is send her off to be brought up by some A sharp, gray eye shot a sideway your collection valuable? If so, keep it old aunts in the country, and he locked ng, and I retreated, having only or the key of your jewel case out of as a splendid joke how they got the copy The words rushed from his lips in an people to stare at. No wonder the bishop hates the very name of the stone." "How long will she stay here?" I asked

"Till Lord Carwitchet can come and

central ottoman where she sat, sur- will be? Do go up to town, Uncle Paul!" I refused indignantly. The very least the setting seen to, and all have examapparently well entertained by her con- I could do was to stand by my poor | ined and admired without giving a hint versation. "And I wanted to talk over young relatives in their troubles and of there being anything wrong. I alold times with him so badly. His poor help them through. I did so. I wore lowed a celebrated mineralogist to see lection wished a dinner at an end so you know. It's not possible that that without a shudder. The more I saw of wrong." earnestly, so as to assure her of my sup- miserable little prig is my poor Mira's that terrible old woman the more I deport and sympathy, though without the girl. The heiress of all the Montanaros tested her, and we saw a very great deal Dutchman celebrated for his imitations. faintest conception why either should be in a black lace gown worth twopence! of her. Leta kept her word and neither I went to him, and he told me at once When I think of her mother's beauty accepted nor gave invitations all that that he had been allowed by Monta-The ices at last. A menu card, fold- and her toilets! Does she ever wear time. We were cut off from all society naro to copy the Valdez-setting and all

content. She reveled in the soft living | "It is a terrible position." doubted still more what I should do She fumbled at the laces at her throat and good fare of the Manor House, the "It is. My cotrustee died lately. I from the corners of which flashed out a a stronger brew. It warmed me this and clawed out a pendant that hung to drives in Leta's big barouche and Do- have never dared to have another ap- sudden suspicious look as I approached, time, but excited me foolishly. There clesiastic of the mediæval type, broad when she moved her hand. A sapphire commons were not unknown. She had sapphire to my daughter on her marclesiastic of the mediæval type, broad commons were not unknown. She had sapphire to my daughter on her had sapphire to m ing. I could picture him charging mace lightning on us. Such a stone! A true, 'at everything she could—the shillings the name of Montanaro."

in hand at the head of his vassals, or rich, cornflower blue even by that | she won at whist, the best fruit at desdelivering over a dissenter of the period wretched artificial light, with soft, vel- sert, the postage stamps in the library to the rack and thumbscrew, but not vety depths of color and dazzling clear-inkstand—that was infinitely suggestive. racked my brain for some word of com-son, Lord Carwitchet!" Sometimes I could have pitied her, she fort. was so greedy, so spiteful, so friendless. I know more about it than any one descending to a quiet cigar among the hand involuntarily, but lady Carwitchet She always made me think of some wicked old pirate putting into a peaceful port to provision and repair his battered old My chaplain-actually, my chaplain tells Tell me what you think of it now. Isn't hulk, obliged to live on friendly terms with the natives, but his piratical old nostrils a-sniff for plunder, and his the assurance to add that he believes got broken somehow." I didn't believe staring at the azure splendor of that piratical old soul longing to be off ma- my daughter is not indisposed to accom- a word. rauding once more. When would that pany him." His consuming wrath acted She gave a shrill, cackling laugh of be? Not till the arrival in Paris of her distinguished American friends, of whom | right. his eyes flashing and his brow "The great Mr. Acton taken in by a we heard a great deal. "Charming bit of Palais Royal gimcrackery! What people, the Bokums, of Chicago, the an advertisement for Bogaerts et Cie.! American branch of the English Beau-They are perfect artists in frauds. Don't | champs, yor know!" They seemed to be you remember their stand at the first taking an unconscionable time to get Paris exhibition? They had imitations there. She would have insisted on being there of every celebrated stone; but I driven over to Northchurch to call at never expected anything made by man | the palace, but that the bishop was uncould delude Mr. Acton, never!" And derstood to be holding confirmations at she went off into another mocking the other end of the diocese. I was alone in the house one afternoon.

haw-hawed knowingly, as if they had sitting by the window toying with the seen the joke all along. I was too be- key of my safe and wondering whether I wildered to reply, which was on the dare treat myself to a peep at my treaswhole lucky. "I suppose I mustn't tell | ures, when a suspicious movement in the why I came to give quite a big sum in park below caught my attention. A francs for this?" she went on, tapping black figure certainly dodged from beher closed lips with her closed fan, and | hind one tree to the next, and then into cocking her eye at us all like a parrot the shadow of the park paling, instead of wanting to be coaxed to talk. "It's a keeping to the footpath. It looked queer. I caught up my field glass and I didn't want to hear her anecdote, es- marked him at one point where he was pecially as I saw she wanted to tell it. | bound to come into the open for a few What I did want was to see that pendant steps. He crossed the strip of turf with again. She had thrust it back among giant strides and got into cover again, her laces, only the loop which held it but not quick enough to prevent me to the velvet being visible. It was set recognizing him. It was—great heavens with three small sapphires, and even | -the bishop! In a soft hat pulled over from a distance I clearly made them out his forehead, with a long cloak and a Guided by some mysterious instinct I hurried to meet him. I opened the conservatory door, and in he rushed, like a hunted rabbit. Without explanation I

where he dropped into a chair and wiped his face. "You are astonished, Mr. Acton," he panted. "I will explain directly. Thanks." He tossed off the glass of brandy I had poured out without waitin the southeast angle of the house; it | ing for the qualifying soda, and looked |

led him up the side staircase to my room,

"I am in serious trouble. You can taken up by the suite of rooms occupied | help me. I've had a shock today-a by Tom and Leta, and on the other side grievous shock." He stopped and tried into my bathroom, the first room in the to pull himself together. "I must trust originally the dressing room. Passing He drew a case from his breast pocket and opened it. "I promised you should see the Valdez sapphire. Look there!" The Valdez sapphire! A great, big, shining lump of blue crystal-flawless and of perfect color-that was all. I took it up, breathed on it, drew out my magnifier, looked at it in one light and another. What was wrong with it? I could not say. Nine experts out of ten would undoubtedly have pronounced

> lucky tenth. I looked at the bishop. His eyes met mine. There was no need of spoken word between us. "Has Lady Carwitchet shown you her sapphire?" was his most unexpected question. "She has? Now, Mr. Acton, on your honor as a connoisseur and a gentleman, which of the two is the Valdez?

"Not this one." I could say naught

the stone genuine. I, by virtue of some

mysterious instinct that has hitherto

always guided me aright, was the un-

"You were my last hope." He broke off and dropped his face on his folded arms with a groan that shook the table on which he rested, while I stood dismayed at myself for having let so hasty a judgment escape me. He lifted a ghastly countenance to me. "She vowed she would see me ruined and disgraced. Paul," she began, "I want you to go I made her my enemy by crossing some up to town at once and stay away till I of her schemes once, and she never forgives. She will keep her word. I shall at pear before the world as a fraudulent trustee. I can neither produce the valuable confided to my charge nor make the ns," she declared, her foot tapping the loss good. I have only an incredible story to tell," he dropped his head and groaned again. "Who will believe me?" "I will, for one."

"Ah, you? Yes, you know her. She took my wife from me, Mr. Acton. Heaven only knows what the hold was admirably, but it was all no use. I that she and over poor Mira. She encouraged her to set me at defiance and eventually to leave me. She was answerable for all the scandalous folly and extravagance of poor Mira's life in Paris -spare me the telling of the story. She "But, my dear, explain. Why left her at last to die alone and uncared shouldn't the bishop and Lady Car- for. I reached my wife to find her dywitchet meet? Why is it worse for him ing of a fever, from which Lady Carwitchet and all her crew had fled. She was raving in delirium and died without recognizing me. Some trouble she had been in which I must never know oppressed her. At the very last she roused from a long stupor and spoke to the nurse. 'Tell him to get the sapphire back-she stole it. She has robbed my child.' These were her last words. The nurse understood no English, and treated tor with a country living in those days, them as wanderings; but I heard them, and knew she was sane when she spoke." "What did you do?"



"Whic' of the two is the Valdez?" "What could I? I saw Lady Carwitchet, who laughed at me and defied escort her to Paris to visit some Ameri- me to make her confess or disgorge. I screamed Lady Carwitchet from the can friends. Goodness knows when that took the pendant to more than one to her ladyship's glib remarks; my whole locked up bathroom. eminent jeweler on pretense of having it; he gave no sign"-"Perhaps they are right and we are

"No, no. Listen. I heard of an old But why? And how? That's the question thousands—for the pendant." No one a giddy, rather rackety young couple your magnifier to find it—a Greek beta. tion, never mind "why." Could I lure replied. "I wanted to get a rise out of who had taken the Dower House for a He also told me that he had sold it to him into the library, the billiard room, the bishop tonight. It used to make year. Lady Carwitchet seemed perfectly Lady Carwitchet more than a year ago."

The bishop's face was ghastly pale, and the moisture started on his brow. I

"Miss Panton may never marry." the blow that has been dealt me today. me that he is going out as a temperance missionary to equatorial Africa, and has as a momentary stimulant. He sat upthunderous. I felt for that chaplain. Then he collapsed miserably. "The sapphires will have to be produced, identified, revalued. How shall I come out of it? Think of the disgrace, the ripping up of old scandals! Even if I were to meeting was on, and tomorrow "Cup compound with Lady Carwitchet, the Day." After dinner there was great tall sum she hinted at was too monstrons. about getting up a party to go on Ger She wants more than my money. Help eral Fairford's drag. Lady Carwitchet me, Mr. Acton! For the sake of your own family interests, help me!"

"I beg your pardon-family interests? | Tom accepted sulkily. don't understand." "If my daughter is childless, her next of kin is poor Marmaduke Panton, who is dying at Cannes, not married or likely like his mother. I went round my fas- and thought, as we go by the early to marry; and failing him, your nephew, tenings with unusual care. Safe and train tomorrow, you might allow me Sir Thomas Acton, succeeds."

My nephew Tom! Leta, or Leta's all. Coming at length to the bathroom, baby, might come to be the possible in- it opened at once. It was the house- the room. Was he trying to find the heritor of the great Valdez sapphire! maid's doing. She had evidently taken | whereabouts of my safe? "You know The blood rushed to my head as I looked sdvantage of my having abandoned the at the great shining swindle before me. 'What diabolic jugglery was at work when the exchange was made?" I de- furniture was all piled together and luckily little chance of indulging the manded fiercely. "It must have been on the last occa-

sion of her wearing the sapphires in London. I ought never to have left her out of my sight."

"You must put a stop to Miss Panton's as autocratically as he could have done fare before I can leave this. They'll be himself.

"Not to be thought of," he admitted helplessly. "Mira has my force of character. She knows her rights and she unlocked and left open for convenience of excitement, for I guessed what was it's in the house she'll make me produce wheels were crashing on the gravel outwas incurring, and saw him disappear | that sapphire you stole?" into the shelter of the friendly night.

When I think of what my feelings were indignation at the though: of the poor as you might if it were real." little expected heir, defrauded ere his birth; of the crushing contempt I felt for myself and the bishop as a pair of wit- something with it, never fear. Hand factory to hear); but I waved him off. I less idiots unable to see our way out of over." the dilemma; all this boiling and surging through my soul I can only wonder-Domenico having given himself a boliday, and the kitchen maid doing her worst and wickedest-that gout or jaundice did not put an end to this story at

Grand hotel."

I was thunderstruck. The longed for deliverance had but come to remove

Brownleys some day or other, and they the way of a ladyship, or such smart | And how about"folks as the Duberly-Parkers. Then we may as well have the Blomfields, and air that awful modern Sevres dessert service she gave us when we were married." I had no objections to make, and she went on, rubbing her soft cheek of the situation filled me with disagainst my shoulder like the purring may. Lord Carwitchet's wolfish glance little cat she was: "Now, I want you to at my rubles took a new meaning. do something to please me-and Mrs. Blomfield. She has set her heart on seeing your rubies, and, though I know you | mother, how long would she be able to hate her about as much as you do that keep it from his clutches? That she had Sevres china"-

"What! Wear my rubies with that! won't I'll tell you what I will do though. Ive got some carbuncles as made her bargain with him long ago? big as prize gooseberries, a whole set. Then you have only to put those Bohemian glass vases and candelebra on the from her or gave consent to its being table, and let your gardener do his worst with his great forced, scentless, vulgar blooms, and we shall all be in keeping." Leta pouted. An idea struck me. "Or, I'll do as you wish, on one condition. You get Lady Carwitchet to wear her big supphire and don't tell her I wish it."

I lived through the next few days as one in some evil dream. The sapphires, like twin specters, haunted me day and night. Was ever man so tantalized? To hold the shadow and see the substance dangled temptingly within my reach. The bishop made no sign of ridding me of my unwelcome charge, and the thought of what might happen strong drink, but there comes a time of in case of a burglary—a fire—an earth- night when no fire can warm and no quake-made me start and tremble at drink can cheer. The bishop's despairall sorts of inopportune moments.

soul was absorbed in the contemplation lowed her to the drawing room door. Lord Carwitchet?" She stopped suddenly, and murmuring

versing with a great, hulking high gusted to explain just then. witchet, tripping past me, exclaimed:

naughty boy! Mr. Acton, this is my

I broke off short in the midst of my polite acknowledgments to stare blankly "But she will!" he shouted. "That is at her. The sapphire was gone! A great gilt cross, with a Scotch pebble like an acid drop, was her sole decoration.

"I had to put my pendant away." she explained confidentially; "the clasp had

Lord Carwitchet contributed little to fell into confidential talk with Mrs. Duberly-Parker. I caught a few uninreferred, I subsequently discovered, to the lady's little book on Northchurch races, and I recollected that the spring was in ecstacies and tried to coax me into joining. Leta declined positively.

The look in Lord Carwitchet's eye returned to my mind as I locked up my room to give it "a thorough spring cleaning," and I anathematized her. The veiled with sheets, the carpet and felt curtain were gone, there were new brooms abou... As I peered around, a voice close at my ear made me jump. Lady Carwitchet's!

"I tell you I have nothing, not a penmarriage in the first place," I pronounced ny. I shall have to borrow my train to give a guess at its value. Perhaps you

glad enough to lend it." Not only had the portiere been re-

will have her jewels. I want you to of dusting behind the wardrobe. I clutched in his palm. He held out to take charge of the thing for me. If | might as well have been in the bedroom. | me the Valdez sapphire. "Don't tell me," I recognized Carwitchit. She'll inquire at the banker's. If et's growl. "You've not been here all great blue star. I made myself smile a you have it we can gain time, if but for | this time for nothing. You've been col- | deprecating smile as I took it from him, a day or two." He broke off. Carriage | lecting for a Kilburn cot or getting sub- | but how dare I call it false to its face? scriptions for the distressed Irish land. As well accuse the sun in heaven of side. We looked at each other in con- lords. I know you. Now, I'm not going being a cheap imitation. I faltered and sternation. Flight was imperative. I to see myself ruined for the want of a prevaricated feebly. Where was my hurried him down stairs and out of the paltry hundred or so. I tell you the colt moral courage, and where was the good, south corridor, where the principal guest you implicitly, Mr. Acton. I have no conservatory just as the doorbell rang. is a dead certainty. If I could have got honest, thumping lie that should have go further, as she's my guest. Just my chambers are, to one of which it was choice. Tell me what you think of this." I think we both lost our heads in the a thousand or two on him last week we aided me? "I have the best authority confusion. He shoved the case into my | might have ended our dog days million- | for recognizing this as a very good copy hands and I pocketed it, without a aires. Hand over what you can. You've of a famous stone in the possession of thought of the awful responsibility I money's worth, if not money. Where's the bishop of Northchurch." His scowl

ed bill. All I possess is honestly come | manufactured by Johannes Bogaert-I that evening-of my murderous hatred by. What could you do with it, even if can give you his address and you can of that smirking, jesting Jezebel who sat | I gave it you! You couldn't sell it as | make inquiries yourself-by special peropposite to me at dinner, my wratiful the Valdez, and you can't get it cut up mission of the then owner, the late Leone "If it's only bogus, why are you always in such a flutter about it? I'll do

"I can't. I haven't got it. I had to "Will you swear it's not in that ward-

see. Give me those keys." I heard a struggle and a jingle, then the wardrobe door must have been flung "Uncle Paul!" Leta was looking her open, for a streak of light struck through sweetest when she tripped into my a crack in the wood of the back. Creepoom next morning. "I've news for you. ing close and peeping through I could She," pointing a delicate forefinger see an awful sight. Lady Carwitchet in the direction of the corridor, "is go- in a flannel wrapper, minus hair, teeth, ing! Her Bokums have reached Paris at | complexion, pointing a skinny forefinger last and sent for her to join them at the that quivered with rage at her son, who was out of range of my vision.

"Stop that, and throw those keys Lady Carwitchet and the great Valdez will lock you up as soon as look at you." She clutched at the bell rope as she "Why, aren't you overjoyed. I am. spoke. "I'll swear I'm in danger of my We are going to celebrate the event by a life from you and give you in charge. dinner party. Tom's hospitable soul is Yes, and when you're in prison I'll keep vexed by the lack of entertainment we you there till you die. I've often thought had provided her. We must ask the I'd do it. How about the hotel robberies last summer at Cowes, eh? Mightn't that's safe now. Have you any candles will be delighted to meet anything in | the police be grateful for a hint or two?

The keys fell with a crash on the bed. accompanied by some bad language in an apologetic tone, and the door slammed

to. I crept trembling to bed. This new and horrible complication They were safe enough, I believedbut the sapphire! If he disbelieved his some plot of her own, of which the an attempt at mortification in his tone. bishop would eventually be the victim. I did not doubt, or why had she not But supposing she took fright, lost her head, allowed her son to wrest the jewel mutilated, divided. I lay in a cold per-

spiration till morning. My terrors haunted me all day. They were with me at breakfast time, when Lady Carwitchet, tripping in smiling. made a last attempt to induce me to accompany her and keep her "Bad, bad boy!" from getting among "those horrid betting men!"

They haunted me through the long peaceful day with Leta and the tete-atete dinner, but they swarmed around and beset me sorest when, sitting alone over my sitting room fire, I listened for the return of the drag party. I read my newspaper and brewed myself some hot ing face kept me company, and his I kept faith with Leta, and reluctantly troubles and the wrongs of the future produced my beautiful rubies on the heir took possession of me. Then the truth and decision, snapping up the case night of her dinner party. Emerging uncanny noises that make all old nouses and pocketing it. "Lady Carwitchet from my room I came full upon Lady Carwitchet in the corridor. She was make themselves heard. Muffled footdressed for dinner, and at her throat I steps trod the corridor, stopping to listen Goodby, we shall not meet again." caught the blue gleam of the great at every door, door latches gently clicked, I shook hands with him most cordialsapphire. Leta had kept faith with me. | boards creaked unreasonably, sounds of ly. "Goodby, Lord Carwitchet. So glad I don't know what I stammered in reply stealthy movements came from the to have met you and your mother. It

The welcome crash of wheels at last | I assure you." of the intoxicating loveliness of the gem. and the sound of the front door bell. I have never seen the Carwitchets That a Palais Royal deception! Incred- could hear Lady Carwitchet making her since. The bishop drove over next day ible! My fingers twitched, my breath shrill adieu to her friends and her steps in rather better spirits. Miss Panton came short and fierce with the lust of in the corridor. She was softly hum- had refused the chaplain. possession. She must have seen the cov- ming a little song as she approached. I "It doesn't matter, my lord," I said to etons glare in my eyes. A look of grat- heard her unlock her bedroom door beified, spiteful complacency overspread fore entering-an odd thing to do. Tom some strange misconception. The stone her features, as she swept on ahead and came sleepily stumbling to his room in your possession is the veritable one. I descended the stairs before me. I fol- later. I put my head out. "Where is could swear to that anywhere. The sap-

"Haven't you seen him? He left us he's welcome to stay away. I don't want Everybody was assembled there that to see more of him." Tom's brow was hill Magazine. I expected to see, with an addition. Not dark and his voice surly. "I gave him a welcome one, by the look on Tom's to understand as much." Whatever had face. He stood on the hearthrug con- happened Tom was evidently too dis-

shouldered fellow, sallow faced, with a I went back to my fire unaccountably heavy mustache and drooping eyelids, relieved, and brewed myself another and rested on my rables, and seemed unac- I felt now as if I could almost see it if I

New Series-Vol. XI. No. 29. "He has come at last! My naughty, | The bishop was a nervous old gentleman. He might have been mistaken all through, Bogaerts might have been mistaken, I might- No. I could not have been mistaken-or I thought not. I fidgeted and famed and argued with myself till I found I should have no peace of mind without a look at the stone in my possession, and I actually went to the safe and took the case out.

The sapphire certainly looked different by lamplight. I sat and stared and all but overpersuaded by better judgment the general entertainment at dinner, but | into giving it a verdict. Bogaert's mark -I suddenly remembered it. I took my magnifier and held the pendant to telligible remarks across the table. They | the light. There, scratched upon the stone, was the Greek Beta!

There came a tap on my door, and before I could answer the handle turned softly and Lord Carwitchet stood before me. I whipped the case into my dressing gown pocket and stared at him. He was not pleasant to look at. especially at that time of night. He had a disheveled, desperate air, his voice was hoarse, his red rimmed eyes

"I beg your pardon," he began civilrubies that night. It made him look so ly enough. "I saw your light burning, closets and desks and doors, I tried them to consult you now on a little business of my mother's." His eyes roved about a lot about precious stones, don't you?" "So my friends are kind enough to

say. Won't you sit down? I have untaste on my own account," was my cautious reply. "But you've written a book about them, and know them when you see

them, don't you?" Now, my mother has given me something, and would like you can put me in the way of disposing of "I certainly can do so if it is worth

moved, but the door behind it had been anything. Is that it?" I was in a fever How it shone and sparkled, like a

grew so black that I saw he believed me. "I didn't. I can show you the receipt- and went on more cheerily: "This was

Montaparo." "Hand it back!" he interrupted (his other remarks were outrageous, but satiscouldn't give it up. It fascinated me. I toyed with it, I caressed it. I made it raise something on it before I left town." display its different tones of colon. I must see the two stones together. I must robe? I dare say you will. I mean to see it outshine its paltry rival. It was a whimsical frenzy that had seized me-I

can call it by no other name. "Would you like to see the original? Curiously enough, I have it here. The

bishop has left it in my charge." The wolfish light flamed up in Carwitchet's eyes as I drew forth the case. He laid the Valdez down on a sheet of paper, and I placed the other, still in its case, beside it. In that moment they looked identical, except for the little loop of sham stones, replaced by a plain down here directly, or I'll rouse the gold band in the bishop's jewel. Carhopelessly and forever out of my reach house. Sir Thomas is a magistrate, and witchet leaned across the table eagerly, the table gave a lurch, the lamp tottered, crashed over and we were left in semi-

> darkness. "Don't stir!" Carwitchet shouted. "The paraffin is all over the place!" He seized my sofa blanket and flung it over the table, while I stood helpless. "There, on the chimney piece? I've got matches." He looked very white and excited as he lit up. "Might have been an awkward job with all that burning paraffin running about," he said quite pleasantly. "I hope no real harm is done." I was

> loop with the three sham sapphires! Carwitchet picked the other up hastily. "So you say this is rubbish?" he asked, his eyes sparkling wickedly, and

> lifting the rug with shaking hands. The

two stones lay as I had placed them.

No! I nearly dropped it back again. It

was the stone in the case that had the



Carwitchet picked the other up hastily. "Utter rubbish!" I pronounced, with

him heartily. "We've all been under phire Lady Carwitchet wears is only an excellent imitation, and-I have seen it something unintelligible, hurried back hours ago. Not come home, eh? Well, with my own eyes- the one bearing Bogaert's mark, the (ek Beta."-Com-

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